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SACRIFICE AND SACRIFICIAL CUSTOMS OF THE KHASI

(OPFER UND OPFERBRAUCHE DER KHASI)

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[Title page]

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[711] Sacrifice and Sacrificial Customs of the Khasi by P.F. Stegmiller, S.D.S., Former Apostolic Missionary of Assam (India).

(With 6 Illustrations in the Text) 782

1. The Offerers of Sacrifices:
   a) Lyngioh,
   b) Ceremonial introduction of the lyndoh.

2. The Sacrifices:
   a) State Sacrifices,
   b) Private Sacrifices,
   c) Secret Sacrifices

1. The Offerers of Sacrifices.

a) Lyndoh.

The religion of the Khasi is an (evil) 771 spirits worship, which has arisen out of fear 782 of misfortune and harm and which is carried 787 out by means of sacrifice. This definition of mine corresponds essentially with the definition of Bivar, (1) who says: "The Khasi reli-

1. Bivar, Administration Report of of the Khasi and Jaintia Hills District of 1876.

gion may be briefly defined as a form to cure illnesses and to ward off misfortune by finding out the name of the devil, who is the original cause of the evil, and by appeasing him by the necessary, sacrifices. Gurdon (2) calls "the 771 782

2. Gurdon, The Khasi (London, 1906) p. 105.

Khasi religion a cult of spirits, i.e., actually

[171] 172 rather a reconciliation of the spirits, good as well as bad, by sacrifices, which are offered occasionally, especially in times of distress."

Undoubtedly sacrifices belong to the practice of the Khasi religion. Now who offers these sacrifices? In order to answer this question, it is necessary to differentiate between the various sacrifices that are customary among the Khasi. We find there

a) public sacrifices,
b) private sacrifices,
c) secret sacrifices,

The public sacrifices are performed by specially designated persons of the male sex (lyngdoh).

Private sacrifices can be performed by the ordinary men of the people as well as by sacrificers (lyngdoh) specifically designated for this.

Secret sacrifices are offered by anybody of the masculine or feminine sex.

172 173 The Khasi do not have priests in the actual sense of the word. There is also no caste or family from which the sacrificers would come. There is also no special school or training for beginning sacrificers. The sacrificers or lyngdoh have also no special mark of distinction. (3) To be a lyngdoh does not mean [212] having

3. Cf. P. Dr. C. Becker, Indisches Kastenwesen und christliche Religion [Indic Caste System and Christian Religion], (Aachen) p. 6.

a special profession. The sacrificers are ordinary people who may have any profession which they practice. Such men only appear occasionally as sacrificers. Even the chief sacrificers, who

782 preside over a whole district and are known as
793 lyngdoh rangbah (head sacrificer), are not sacrificers by profession. Thus, for example, the chief sacrificer of Laxin in the district of War is a coolie by trade and carries loads from one market to the other (Fig.1).[1] None of these sacrificers has a revered position among the people. It is rather the "fear" of them which makes them respected. For the Khasi firmly believe that the lyngdoh or even merely the ordinary sacrificers are masters over the (evil) spirits. Therefore they are very careful not to quarrel with the sacrificers, so that they will not conjure up spirits in their anger and set them on the guilty one and thus bring him to destruction.

782 The sacrificers are not actually offerers
596 of sacrifices in the strict sense of the word,
793 but only representative people at the sacrifice. For the Khasi live under a matriarchy. With a sharpness of logic and with thoroughness they have probably developed and put into effect as a social organization the most beautiful pattern of a matriarchy of anyone up to today. The mother is the head of the family, the only tie that gives the family unity; she is the sole possessor and sole owner of all property, and inheritance is only possible through her. The father has no right to the relationship of the children. These belong only to the maternal line. Even his ashes will not rest finally beside those of his wife or children, but in the grave of his mother. Whatever the father may earn or save does not belong to his children, but returns to the maternal line. It is not surprising that with such views it is also the mother who has all the spiritual power. And in reality she is in complete possession of the highest spiritual power. It is her duty to

[1] [illegible]

772 preserve the customs of the family or sib; she
774 must see to it that the ancient domestic customs
775 of the household sacrifices are truly preserved;
it is her duty, to keep the inherited ceremonies
of the sacrifices pure and to hand them down
conscientiously to the descendants. Therefore
she has to arrange for the necessary sacrificial
materials; she must prepare everything; she is
the only one who must fast before the offering
of many a sacrifice; she gives the order for the
sacrifice, and she should also have to perform
it herself.

But this does not happen. In reality no woman offers the sacrifice herself. (4) She is

4. With the exception of the secret sacrifices, about which, see later.

[Gen] represented by a male person. But he must be related to her on the maternal side. Usually a maternal uncle (kui) represents her. Such representation by a relative is always necessary, whether it be for a public or a private sacrifice. But not merely the degree of relationship must lie in the feminine line; there is still something else that must be observed for each sacrifice. Even though the duties of the sacrificers and their methods of sacrificing are very different and are arranged according to the customs and inherited usages in the family or in the sib or in the state or community, yet in one point they are all similar: namely, all the sacrificers must be assisted by a woman during the performance of the sacrificial action. She is usually called ka iyagoh (the priestess). (5) Because the man must function in her name and he is only her representative at the sacrifice,

192 Gurdon (5) believes that his ex lyngdoh is with-
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§. Gurdon, The Khasi, 2nd. ed.

out doubt a holdover from that time of the matriarchy in which a priestess also performed the sacrifices herself.

b) The Public and Ceremonial Introduction as a lyngdoh.

193 How does a person become a lyngdoh? This
194 question can also not be answered so easily.
227 This is very different in the different districts. In general it may be assumed that the lyngdoh arise from the practice of household (private) sacrifices. Since it is the duty of the woman to watch over the sacrificial ceremonies, she will introduce one of her sons to the rite of performing sacrifices that is peculiar to the family, so that he will be able to occasionally offer the sacrifice in the prescribed manner or in case of need (sickness, death, misfortune). But because the maternal uncle is usually called upon for the sacrifices, the son who has learned to offer sacrifices will have little chance to practice this art in his own family, but rather among his maternal relatives. And the other way around, people from there who know how to offer sacrifices will be called into this household. In this way the man who offers sacrifices becomes known in the neighborhood. If he has luck with his arrangements and if success crowns his efforts, the more will spread that he is an experienced sacrificer whom the spirits obey and that he knows how to seek them out, to drive them away, or to propitiate them, as the case requires. Thus it happens that such a man is called upon again and again to offer sacrifices,

[illegible]

especially in touchy cases. Thus of his own accord he becomes a lyngdoh and the people recognise him as such on the basis of his successes. Whoever is once esteemed a lyngdoh remains one for the rest of his life. Just as in our country ordinary people call a dental technician "Doctor" and a high school teacher "Professor," so the Khasi call a man who is well known for his good sacrifices thatr "lyngdoh," although this person would not be able to prove his right to the title officially. This way of becoming a lyngdoh is probably the usual practice in most of the cases.

But it is not the way everywhere. There is a report from Lamin (6) that a group mother

6. Salvatorianische Mitteilungen /Salvatorian communications/. 1956 No. 6, p. 84.

/Kamsemutter/ of the lyngdohs is there. Gurdon (7) also writes about a lyngdoh tribe, from which

7. Gurdon, loc. cit.

the lyngdohs are drawn. I have never found this to happen and I have never heard of a lyngdoh group /Khamp/, or a lyngdoh sib (jaid). It could certainly happen that several sons of one and the same mother could by chance learn how to sacrifice and that they all excel in it and that they all have good luck so that these brothers are all called in as lyngdohs.

But the mother concerned has by no means become a lyngdoh group mother /Kamsemutter/ just because of that, and the sib involved has no claims to the title: lyngdohjaid (lyngdoh group /Khamp/). Naturally the correct art of sacrificing, which is often very involved and difficult,

is more easily handed on through the children
them outside of the family, although that can
also occur. But this teaching each other would
never be a justification for a community or
group [illegible] relationship of lyngdohs.
In those Khasi territories in which the
lyngdoh are still installed by public recognition
so that they may function as lyngdohs during
great community or state sacrifices, it is done
in the following or in a similar way.

If a certain man has been decided upon to be
choosen as lyngdoh for the district, for the com-
munity, or for the kingdom, he is invited to of-
fer his first official sacrifice. First of all
he must take a purification bath. Then he must
go to the top of a nearby mountain with all his
relatives or electors (who are usually his re-
latives). This is done with great ceremony. The
new lyngdoh is festively dressed. Freshly washed
clothes cover his body. His turban (jingpong)
is decorated with white rooster feathers. He
wears a leather belt around his body on which the
short Khasi quiver hangs (ka ringkap). He has a
long sword (ka waitlam) in one hand and a dancing
brush of goat hair (u symbiah) in the other.
The male escorts are also dressed like him, but
instead of the white rooster feathers they have a
bunch of bright colored (thuia) flowers on their
turbans. The entire distance from the house of
the new lyngdoh up to the top of the mountain
must be covered by dancing, which explains the
ceremonial dancing clothes of the male escorts.
But also the female participants in the parade,
who do not have to dance, insist on appearing all
dressed up even if they are not in dancing
clothes. They are also dressed in freshly washed
clothes. A snow white scarf on their heads and
a sky-blue cloak marks them from a distance as
participants in the festivities. In addition most
of them wear the usual Khasi ornaments: chains of

795 gold and silver, of gilded beads alternating
792 with real beads of coral. The women and girls also take some light refreshments along. They take care of the necessary pauses for quais (betel nuts) and smoking, for the Khasi are never in a hurry. Several coolies, who accompany the procession, carry the necessary utensils for the sacrifices on their backs in waterproof woven baskets (ka shang) with forehead straps (u star) woven of bamboo, while other [illegible] lead the living animals to be sacrificed: a goat and a rooster.

When everything is ready, a little band, consisting usually of only a flute player (ka 'tangmuri) and one or two drummers (kaing), begins to play and the procession moves up the mountain dancing. It proceeds slowly. From time
795 to time everybody rests and the coconut pipe (ka jingkih duna) is passed from mouth to mouth. After a bite of betel nut (quai) has been taken, the procession moves on again dancing until the top of the mountain is reached. The Khasi must be known and admired because of the quietness and cheerfulness with which they do everything. There is no hurrying and haste, no rushing back and forth and no forgetting of anything. They give themselves time for everything and therefore succeed in what they attempt.

Hopping, miming, and skipping they reach the top. If there are Khasi ouds there, the ones who have arrived break off leaves from them and strew them on the ground. Otherwise the Khasi oud leaves are brought along from home so that they can be strewn on the ground on the top of the mountain. This makes the ground holy and consecrated to the spirits. The men now put aside the swords and the dancing brush. They begin to prepare the first ceremonial sacrifice

799 of the new lyngdoh. A hole is dug anywhere in
Ira the ground with a chopping knife (ka wait) and the humus (earth or loam) which is dug out is brought to the middle of the place, piled up and thus serves as the altar. (215) A gourd bottle with fermented rice water is placed on the altar beside a bunch of betal nut leaves and beside a little basket full of rice and pounded meal next a pepper leaf, and the whole is surrounded by leaves of the Khasi oak trees.

Now a circle is formed. Several men lead the goat into the ring and hold it tight by a rope. Another man seizes the goat by the hind-feet and lifts these so high that the goat is only standing on its forefeet, and since it is tied by a rope it cannot move easily.

Now the new lyngdoh steps forward. He steps in front of the sacrifical animal, head high and armed with a chopping knife (ka wait). He folds his hands and takes the chopping knife between the flat surfaces of his hands. Then he crouches down, while murmuring his verses. Everything is still around him. The lyngdoh prays, i.e., he murmurs something which is not understood, yet everyone knows that he is now speaking to the spirits. After he has done this, he stands up. Taking the chopping knife by the handle with both hands, he swings it high and cuts off the goat's head with one blow. Blood shoots out in a wide arc. The body of the animal falls sideways to the ground. (Fig. 1. The chief sacrificer of Laxmin in his private occupation as a coolie). A cry of joy bursts from the throats of the crowd when the neck is severed. Raising himself up from the blow, the lyngdoh presents the bloody knife towards all sides and then hands it over to someone else. Now he picks up the severed head from the ground and lets the blood drip on the altar and on the sacrifical

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[The chief sacrificer of Lemnos in his priestly occupation at a tomb]

[913]

Fig. 1

gifts carefully placed there. Finally he sets the goat's head on the top of the little pile of earth thereby flattening it out, and thus crowns the altar with the bloody head.

Now the body of the goat is dragged over and the new lyngdoh begins to divide it. He has certainly done this many times before when he offered private sacrifices, or perhaps when he offered sacrifices for his own family, or perhaps when he was called upon by others to perform such sacrifices. But this time he is particularly happy about it. After all it is the first ceremonial sacrifice which he is performing officially. This is not as it usually is when he must sacrifice for sick or dying people and must propitiate the spirits and perform the observation of the entrails very precisely. No, this is a sacrifice of joy. He only needs to place the nine prescribed parts on the altar. He does that, taking a piece of the liver, the heart, the lungs, the kidneys, the loin, the spleen, the gall bladder, [illegible] the small intestine and the large intestine. The others surround the bloody parts with leaves of the Khasi oak trees and the new lyngdoh shouts out joyfully: "The sacrifice is good!" The others repeat the cry and clap their hands as a sign of agreement. The goat is offered to the "god who commanded the sacrifice" (u 'lei Shillong). [illegible] Fig. 2. The state sacrifice at Mawphrang.[illegible]

Now a second sacrifice begins in honor of the god u 'lei lyngdoh. A rooster is slaughtered and placed in pieces on the altar. While the new lyngdoh is letting the blood of the rooster drip on the sacrificial gifts on the altar, he shouts out: "Hey! The blood of the rooster! Hurrah!"

The sacrifice is completed. Coolies pack up the sacrifical meat into the baskets that were

[illegible] Gallery 44, p. 12 --Knight]

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Fig. 2 p. 11
[The state function of
oleograph]

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Fig. 3 p. 13
[Egyptian pharaoh]

772 brought along and push the sacrificial gifts to
793 one side.

The new lyngdoh now gives the sign for the dance of joy. The men who are all in dancing clothes get up and seize the swords and dancing brushes they brought along. They place themselves one behind the other. The music begins and slowly the dancers move away from the place. Hopping and rocking from one leg to another, they move forward, forming a definite figure while doing it. Sometimes it is a circle, sometimes an eight, sometimes a spiral, which then slowly resolves itself. Now the dancers face each other in pairs. With loud cries each pair jumps at each other and they beat their swords together, uttering cries of joy which are seconded by the spectators. [Fig.]. Egg throwing: placing rice]*

Now they arrange themselves as at the beginning and the dance begins again. Thus the dance crosses the place several times, each time the peculiar dance (shad mastieh) ending with the striking together of the swords. The new lyngdoh, who has now performed his first ceremonial sacrifice which is concluded by the sword dance, declares his veneration for the god who has commanded the sacrifice. For this purpose all the men arrange themselves in order and with the lyngdoh at the head bow three times before the (invisible) god. While they are all standing, the lyngdoh takes several steps backward and standing repeats his bow. With this the ceremony is over.

They arrange themselves in the order they came in. Dancing they go down the mountain to the hut of the lyngdoh. As soon as possible a new sacrifice [all] is offered to the u 'lei lyngdoh, the god of sacrificers. With this the new lyngdoh has officially begun his new office

* [See ontogeny #5, p. 13 -- Ames-C]

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Fig. 4 p. 15
[Egg throwing:
Throwing of the egg]

Fig. 5 p. 15
[Egg Throwing:
Investigators]

782 and can now also appear at the public state and
793 community sacrifices when any basis of relationship justifies it.

This ceremonial way of introducing lyngdohs is still the custom especially in the kingdoms of Nyrim and Nongkrem.

The number of active, official lyngdohs varies according to the region. A kingdom has at least one official lyngdoh. [Fig. 4. Egg throwing: Throwing of the egg.] [Fig. 5. Egg throwing: Investigation] But the kingdom
[794] of Nongkrem, for example, has six official lyngdohs, who together with the king and with other lyngdohs from neighboring villages annually offer the great state sacrifice. (8) Even

8. P. Dr. Becker, S.D.S., "Die Nongkrempuja in den Khasibergen" [The Nongkrem Puja in the Khasi Mountains], Anthropos, Vol. 4, (1909), p. 898.

villages often have their own official lyngdohs.

For the services which they perform for the people by offering sacrifices, they do not receive money or a present of money. Usually their trouble is rewarded by natural products, such as a hen, a bottle of rice liquor or even, though more rarely, by a pig. Obviously they always have the right to participate in the sacrificial meal.

2. The Sacrifices.

a) State Sacrifices.

961 According to the report of the last census
744 the tribe of Khasi numbers about 200,000 people.
621 (9) These are not unified under one ruler, but

9. P. Dr. C. Becker, S.D.S. In

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Stromtal des Brahmaputra [In the Valley of the Brahmaputra], (Aachen: Xaverius Publishing House, 1923) p. 293.

782 621 are divided into 10 kingdoms and 15 small states (communities). In each of these kingdoms and communities an official state sacrifice is of- 783 776 fered each year. The smaller state units offer it to the u basa shnong or to the u phan u 796 kyrpad (the tutelary god of a village), the larger one to the u 'lei Shillong (the god who has commanded the sacrifice) [218]. The purpose of this large sacrifice is to thank the revered god for the country (kingdom or community) and to beg him to make its inhabitants 782 healthy and happy. This is shown by the prayers 796 spoken at these sacrifices, namely: "O god Shillong! for thee is this prayer, this sacrifice of goat, of hen, of kpu and rymsi (a kind of bread of rice meal or cornmeal with pounded sugar), of utensils of preparation, as thou hast given them to the royal lineage, so that once in every year Puja is celebrated in thy name, so that we may live happily, be healthy and increase, so that kings will arise, so that their honor and that of the kingdom will grow and increase and the children of the kingdom will spread out to increase thy name and thy honor." (10)

10. P. Dr. C. Becker, S.D.S., "Die Nongkrempuja in den Khasibergen" [The Nongkrem Puja in the Khasi Mountains], Anthropos Vol. 4, 1909, p. 901.

In another prayer they say: "O lord, thou who hast created heaven and earth, thou hast placed a king that we may be children of his

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Fig. 6 p. 18 [The village chief in his sacrificial coat and ornaments]

782 kingdom, thou hast given the sun and the moon,
796 for reckoning the year, so that we may have Puja once in the year, so that kings may arise, the children of the valleys may increase and thrive, the children of the Khasi, the children of the Bhoi, the children of the War, so that the sacrificial gifts may increase before the face of thine altar." (11)

11. P. Dr. Becker, S.D.S., loc. cit., p. 902 (Anthropos).

782 At these state and community sacrifices, the
793 official lyngdohs are the chief one to appear,
622 who together with the ruling king or chieftain
796 and with other lyngdohs from the villages perform the sacrifices. These annual state sacrifices are introduced and performed with great ceremony. They take place in front of the house of the s'iem sad (high priestess) of the state involved. (Fig. 2) [Fig. 6. The village chief in his sacrificial coat and ornaments].

782 In addition to the usual sacrificial gifts,
796 which are grouped together on a small altar of earth and which consist of a banana leaf, betel nut leaves, pepper leaves, betel nuts, kpu and rynsi, fermented rice water in a gourd bottle, and oak leaves, there are chiefly hens and goats and at the end a pig. Goats are slaughtered in great numbers, so that the chief festival day of the state sacrifice is called pus blang (the goat heads) by the people.

782 Besides the slaughtering of the sacrificial
585 animals, the dance plays a chief part. At these
796 great sacrifices all the dances that are customary among the Khasi are performed: the dance [219] of the unmarried girls, the dance of the girls and men together, but both sexes are so placed that the men form an outer circle and the girls

[See category 44, p. 19--Ankyl]

an inner circle; the dance of the men with torches; the sword dance of the men; the shield dance of the men; the dance of the men in couples; the solo dance of a girl and the solo dance of a man.

All the inhabitants of the kingdom combine for the state sacrifice. With the cheerfulness peculiar to the Khasi they watch the passage of the individual sacrifices and the dances for hours at a time. In the evening of the day of the chief festival a sacrifical meal is held, in which all the sacrificers, dancers, and spectators may participate.

b) Private Sacrifices.

In addition to the annual large state sacrifices, other sacrifices are also offered by the Khasi. These are the usual sacrifices which arise from the needs of daily life. The following can be mentioned as such:

1. The sacrifice for questioning spirits.
2. The sacrifice at the name giving.
3. The sacrifice before every important business, for example, before the market, before planting rice, before shooting arrows, before building a hut, before a journey, etc.
4. The sacrifice of thanks after recovering health.
5. The sacrifice in cases of sickness.
6. The sacrifice at the time of death.
7. [illegible] sacrifice for finding out which spirits must be propitiated. This is a matter of finding out past errors of those already dead).
8. The sacrifice at a cremation.
9. The sacrifice at the burial of bones:

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a) at the mau shing (first burial),
b) at the mau phru (second burial),
c) at the mau bah (third burial).

10. The sacrifice in memory of the deceased:
a) the sacrifice at the end of a month,
b) the sacrifice at the end of a year.

These various sacrifices can be offered by the official lyngdohs as well as by other lyngdohs or even by ordinary men from the people, provided they know precisely the ritual which governs the family concerned and are guided by it.

782 784 678 A definite spiritual attitude is not required for any sacrifice. There is only one exception here: namely at the sacrifice for the third and last burial of the bones in the mau bah. This may only be carried out if all relatives of the sib concerned are living in peace with each other. This must be established by the lyngdoh himself who is performing the sacrifice. If any kind of enmity or a quarrel is discovered by the investigation, the burial and the sacrifice that goes with it must be postponed until the condition of general peace in the family is fulfilled.

782 [720] As concerns the place of the sacrifices, the areas may be divided in the following way:

1. Sacrifice is made in the hut:
at the name giving,
after recovering health.
2. Sacrifice is made in the courtyard in front of the hut:
when questioning spirits,
before important business,
in cases of sickness,
khein kwaid,
in case of death.
3. Sacrifice is made away from the house:
at a cremation at the place it occurs,
at the three different burials of the bones at the places where they occur,

at a memorial sacrifice at the place where the bones rest.

The sacrificial gifts for the individual sacrifices are the following:

1. At the questioning of the spirits: eggs, hens,
2. At the name giving: rice brandy, rice meal, eggs, roots, leaves.
3. Important business: eggs, hens.
4. After recovering health: kpu and rynai, gourds and gourd bottles, rice brandy.
5. In cases of sickness: eggs, hens, goats, pigs, cows.
6. In case of death: egg (stomach egg), rooster, rice, pig, steer.
7. Khein kwaid: eggs, gourds and gourd bottles, rice brandy, water, doves, hens, goats, pigs.
8. At a cremation: rice, kpu and rynai, cows, pigs, he-goats, rooster, egg (stomach egg).
9. At the burial: a) rooster, rice bread, egg, brandy,
   b) rooster, rice bread, rice brandy,
   c) pigs, rooster, steer, he-goat.
10. At the memorial sacrifice:
    a) pig,
    b) pig.

Three distinct sacrifices may be differentiated, which are repeated again and again in some form or other:

1. The food sacrifice.
2. The egg sacrifice (egg throwing).
3. The blood sacrifice with observations of the entrails:
   a)rooster (hen)
   b)goat (pig, steer, cow).

1. The Food Sacrifice.

782 An altar is necessary primarily for offering this sacrifice. This altar is made of earth and consists of a little heap of earth which has been dug out of the ground near where the sacrifice is to be offered by a ka wait (chopping knife).

The usual sacrificial gifts, ingredients, and sacrificial utensils are:

kpu: a kind of bread made of rice meal. The rice is first washed, dried, and then pounded into meal.

ryusi: a kind of bread shaped like a bullet of pounded rice meal or cornmeal mixed with sugar.

(771) u khaw: uncooked, shelled rice.

u skan: a gourd bottle.

u kiad: rice brandy.

ka um : water.

kwai :betel nut.

kyupeu: a pepper leaf.

ela kait: a banana leaf.

ka ding sning: leaves of the Khasi oak (botanical name: Cartanopsis sp.)

u luta: a silver water container.

ka pliang rupa: a silver plate like a dish.

ka pliang kyuthei: a rather large brass dish.

The sacrificing of the gifts consists in their being placed on the altar in certain forms or figures and being reddened with the blood of the animals (which will be sacrificed afterwards) or at least being sprinkled with water and rice brandy.

782 2. The Egg Sacrifice (Egg Throwing)
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The egg sacrifice or egg throwing (shad pylleng) as it is usually called is the most

782 787 common of all. It is used on those occasions when something must be asked about or investigated. The spirits are supposed to inform at the egg throwing where the most favorable place is for the building of the hearth (building the hut,, from which forest the needed bamboo should be fetched for the construction of the hut, where the most productive huntings areas are, which is the most favorable day for setting out on a journey, in which week the cultivation of rice can begin, at which market the best sale may be expected, where a general archery contest can take place, for what reason somebody is sick, who has caused a difficult birth by a moral crime.

Lyngdohs are rarely called in for this sacrifice. For the Khasi are so familiar with egg throwing that probably most of the older men know how to do it. The process is also not too complicated, so that even a person with little practice can dare to try egg throwing. Only in very difficult cases, especially in cases of sickness, is a lyngdoh sought out to perform the sacrifice. Or also in\cases in which the spirits do not wish to answer. (12)

12. P. Stegmiller, S.D.S., "Teufelsopfer" [Devil Sacrifice], Missionsverlag für Indien [Missionary Publishers for India], (1922: Vienna) p. 51.

The following objects are needed for the offering of the egg sacrifice.

1. A wooden platter which is rounded at the corners and has a handle. It is called ka dieng shad pylleng (the wood for egg throwing). The middle part is called ka lieng (the little saucer).

2. Red earth for making distinguishable the outer side of the egg shells.

782 787 3. Uncooked, husked rice which is placed in several piles (or also only in one pile) on the gaming board.

4. Last of all eggs, which one by one, after being strewn with rice (fig. 3), are rubbed with red earth, fondled, and called by flattering names and then thrown on the gaming board with great force (fig. 4). In this process the egg bursts and the white and the yolk splatter around, while the shells are scattered in all directions. So that the soft part in the egg will not obstruct the egg shells too much, the sacrificer speaks the following before he throws: "May the clear part come into the outermost corner! May it climb into the corner! Down with the left! May the left strike together!"

/722/ The position of the egg shells provides the answer (fig. 5) and the various positions means approximately the following:

1. When the small pieces of shell lie with their insides down, on both sides of the board but not on the little saucer, then the question of the egg throwing is not answered. If this happens, the sacrificer asks beforehand at the throwing of the next egg with a sad voice: "Have I perhaps sinned? Have I washed and bathed the loam? the white loam? the yellow loam? the sticky loam? the piled up loam? Oh let me know what lies below and what lies above! Let me know that which is lying on the back and that which is lying on the stomach! Oh hear me, thou egg of the oracle!"

2. If a lot of little eggshells are lying around the saucer, that means that there are a lot of reasons (for example for the illness) which cannot be found out. In this case the sacrificer will express himself approximately thus with the next egg: "Oh egg of the oracle! Has a sin, has a crime been committed? Was the tutelary

372 spirit of our village insulted? I wish to con-
377 sider and to enlighten the eye of understanding as to what may well be the cause and the guilt of the sorrow and vexation! Look hither! Very tiny is my desire and soft as cotton my will! Thou shalt say! Thou shalt explain! Thou shalt help! Oh line up the bits of shell together! Make smaller the spaces in between! Cross the left over the right! Say: No! It does not come from the family, it comes from outside, that which carries the guilt for the misfortune!"

3. If a little piece of egg shell is lying with its outside facing down at the end of the little saucer in the middle of the board, that means that the goddess wishes a blood sacrifice.

4. If a little piece of egg shell is lying quite alone at the upper end of the saucer, that means that the divinity is very angry.

Thus the Ghazi have determined the meaning of all possible positions of the eggshells, according to whether they are lying up or down, in the middle, or at the end, or the side of the saucer. It is the meaning which the divinity wishes to make by the position. It is obvious that sacrifices are made until a position is finally reached which presents the desired result. Thus it happens that 80, 100, and more eggs are used at a single sacrifice.

This method of throwing eggs is the most usual. But there is a still simpler way. The sacrificer wraps the egg in a leaf (as is met). He takes it in his left hand and strews it with grains of rice. Now he tries to press in the tip of the egg with the thumb of his right hand while uttering sayings and magic formulae. If this succeeds, it is a good sign, if not, it means the opposite. (1)

1). P. Dr. C. Becker, S.V.D. "Das

Ka
497

diversion der Khasi" /Egg Throwing Among the Khasi/, Anthropos, 1917, p. 436.

Only in cases of sickness does the sacrificer not take the usual gaming board. In its place he uses a rather large brass dish (ka pilang kyrshot), on which he lays a lattice work made of thin bamboo sticks (igra). The broken egg runs through the lattice work into the dish and from the eggshells the sacrificer then predicts in the same way as described above, since he considers the narrow bamboo lattice work as the gaming board. (1)

1. P. Steinmüller, S.V.D., "Bei der Opferung eines Familienmitgliedes" /On the Illness of a Member of a Family/, Anthropos, 1923-24, p. 497.

3. The Blood Sacrifice with Observation of the Entrails.

a) The Rooster Sacrifice (jingkmie sylar).

If the desired result is not obtained by egg throwing, the sacrifice of the rooster usually follows. A rooster is dedicated to the godhead by strewing it with rice, betel, kyn, and cynet. The sacrificer now digs a sharp knife in the sacrificial water that is standing ready and then cuts through the rooster's throat. He lets the blood drip on the altar and on the sacrificial gifts. Now the observation of the entrails begins, which is not always the same but is described

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ppz as follows since this is the usual way. (15)
ppf

15. P. Dr. G. Becker, S.J.S., Anthropos Vol. 4 (1909), p. 899.

"The gullet of bees is formed like a fork about in the middle between the neck and the stomach. The right part of the prong is called a Kiet (gut), the left a bete (man). First the rectum is looked at to see if it is perhaps empty or has any symptoms of a disease or spots. In these cases, the little fowl is unsuitable for sacrifice. But even when everything is without fault, better indications are still wanted. The forking mentioned above is looked at and the sacrificer, holding the intestine in his hand, begins the ceremony with the question: "Nga kyili nga kyrtham da ka shat khan, lang rangbah a bete, dam a Kiet?" (I ask and seek by throwing and by oracles, does the sun rise and the gut bow?) While saying that he sprinkles the forking of the gullet with a little rice with the other hand, whereby because of the convulsive trembling one part or the other actually raises itself. If "the man" raises itself, that is a good sign, since the opposite forking, the "gut" then bows or stays still as a sign of agreement."

The sacrificing Lyngkoh calls upon the god-head and ends with the following words: "Hey, the blood of the rooster! Hurrah! Look there, I tear out its navel, its entrails, so that the advice might be good. This here is the ornament, this the garment, this the silk, this the bag and the net, is it not so? See here the sign of collecting, here the sign of escaping from destruction and the guilt, is it not so?" (16)

16. P.F. Stagnilier, Anthropos, 1931-32, pp. 420 ff.

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b) The Goat Sacrifice (pom blang).

The head of the goat is cut off with one blow. Only parts of the insides of the animal (na ka kpoh) may be taken for the actual sacrifice. Either 5, 7, or 9 parts are taken. If 5 parts are taken, they are from the heart, kidneys, lungs, gall bladder, and liver. If 7 parts are taken, parts of the spleen and loin are added. If 9 parts, the pieces mentioned above and pieces from the small and large intestines. If the parts are good, then the sacrifice is also good, but if spots and speckles are present (da ka thoh da ka tar da ka braih da ka briah) the sacrifice must be repeated, as it is nullified. The rest of the ritual is like the one described for the first celebration of a lyngkhh.

In the case of pigs, it is only observed whether liver, lungs, spleen and gall bladder are healthy.

7f4

c) Secret Sacrifices.

Although the sacrifices already described and their offerers are in general known, a whole set of tales is woven around the "secret sacrifice." The Khasi themselves [illegible] speak of them only with shyness and abhorrence. After all it concerns a human sacrifice which is offered the devil "u thlen." The fact is that these sacrifices were offered and are still offered. I myself knew two persons who fell as sacrifice to this revolting superstition between the years 1905-10.

In order to describe the secret sacrifices of the "human sacrifices" of the Khasi it is necessary:

1. to sketch the thlen tale,
2. to discuss the preparations for the

772 sacrifice — that is the murder itself.
3. to describe the offering of the sacrifice.

Following from this, several questions arise of their own accord, namely:

1. How do the people accept these facts?
   a) the fear among the people,
   b) the liberation from thlen,
   c) story of former thlen possessors.

2. The position of the English-Indian government to these human sacrifices?

773 1. The Thlen legend
774
775 About five miles west of Cherrapungi, (15)

15. The following accounts are taken from the article "Menschenopfer unter den Khasi" (Human Sacrifice Among the Khasi) by Dr. C. Becker, S.V.D., Schweizerische Mitteilungen (Swiss Communications) 1939, No. 5, pp. 75 ff.

near the great waterfall Noh ka likai, there is the cave Pomblai, about which an old Khasi legend is concerned. The dwelling place of an enormous snake —called a thlen — which caused great destruction among men and animals was once here. People had to pass here to go to market; half of them were regularly swallowed by the thlen, the others could continue their way peacefully. It was a rule for the thlen, only to consume half the number of people or animals that came by. After many people had lost their lives in this fashion, the Khasi one day held a large meeting, a darbar, with the inhabitants of the valleys, to consider how they could

733 remedy this great misfortune. A brave man named
704 Suidnoh volunteered to cause a change. He be-
772 gan to drive goats, pigs, and cattle to the thlen to give them to the snake to eat. After he had done this for quite some time, the thlen became quite tame and trusting. One day Suidnoh brought along a piece of glowing hot iron which he held with a tongs. He ordered the snake to open its mouth so that he could give it a piece of meat. The snake believed him, opened its mouth and Suidnoh quickly thrust the glowing hot iron in its throat so that the snake burst with horrible writhings. In another gathering it was decided to cut the snake into two pieces: the inhabitants of the valley were supposed to eat one half, the Khasi the other half. Since the former are very numerous, it was easy for them to manage their portion; but the Khasi could not quite master their share and left some of it. Others say that in the village Mawpho, west of Cherrapoonji, an old woman forgot to eat up her share. In short the Khasi did not quite get rid of their share and so it came about that the snake could grow again and he still lives among them up to the present day.

2. The Preparations for the Sacrifice

However the thlen is no longer the public engager of previous times. He has withdrawn into the interior of the houses; also he no longer is in just one place, but may be found in several. There are certain families that are considered possessors of such a devil snake and are known as such among the people. They are simply called the Bongri thlen, owners of a thlen. The thlen is cared for and secretly kept by the owner very carefully in a safe place. It is only supposed to be seen by members of the household

774 of the Ulen owner. It is also said of the snake
773 that it can reduce itself to the size of a thin
772 thread and therefore can easily find a place in a basket or earthern jar. Others even say that it has the power to change itself into a cat or a rooster or a stone and to stay with the owner in this form.

774 The possession of the Ulen is a valuable
772 thing for the owner; for where the Ulen makes
682 his home, it brings good fortune and wealth to the family. However, the snake only does this on the condition that it is provided with human blood. If it does not receive this, it announces itself from time to time in the family concerned during the night in a dream. If its desires are still not fulfilled, it then comes bringing sickness, misfortune, impoverishment, and the like. There is nothing that the owner can do other than satisfy or propitiate the Ulen by human murder. In the night he waits for his victim alone or with another whom he has hired for this purpose. Often the Ulen worshippers have a so-called mongbylle, i.e., a wage earner who shares the wealth of his master for his efforts without having to bother with other work. He goes out in ambush with his master and watches hidden from the heights of a mountain, or along the road, or at the edge of the forest to see whether anyone is coming along the way. By signs or shouts he warns his master who is waiting some distance away, and then they commit the murder together. Both are usually disguised and armed with a wooden club for killing their victim. The ordinary people call these murderers in the service of the Ulen as well as the Ulen worshippers in general only mogohoh noh, literally, killers. They may not use iron weapons for committing their dark deeds, as iron proved to be fatal for the Ulen tribal father, as was told

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776 above. The tips of the hair and the finger-
772 nails of the slain person are cut off with
782 silver shears; then the murderer pricks the wing of the nose with a silver lancet and catches the blood that flows out in a bamboo tube. This is called pjar snam. Again no dish or iron or metal may be used for catching the blood.

). The Offering of the Sacrifice.

782 The thlen owner now asks the oracle about
776 the actual time when he should sacrifice the blood to the thlen. When this is revealed, the whole family gathers together in the hut of the thlen owner (male or female) in the dark night-time. The doors are opened and costly clothe are spread out on the floor. The blood of the slain person is poured into a brass dish or a plate (ka pliang); the hair and fingernails are placed there. One member of the family begins to strike a small drum and cries while doing it: "O uncle, o father, come forth, we have done everything to make thee satisfied, and now we have succeeded. [776] Give us thy blessing, so that we may receive health and wealth!" They say that the thlen is only seen by the members of the household of the owner. No matter what form it otherwise has while staying in the house, at the sacrifice of human blood it appears in its true form as a snake. It is supposed to crawl out of its hiding place when called upon, then stretch itself out until it has attained its full size. It approaches the platter and waits a while in front of it until the spirit of the slain person appears standing on the platter. The spirit is supposed to laugh. The snake now begins to swallow the entire form, beginning with the feet; the victim is supposed to laugh continuously. Obviously it is difficult to find out

772 anything more certain and exact about activities
774 that are carried on in complete seclusion. The devil snake is satisfied again after receiving the sacrifice, and now pours forth a plenitude of good luck and wealth over the house.

Substitute sacrifice: Naturally it is not always easy to find a human sacrifice. In this case the thlen owner tries to help himself in another way. He sets out to catch at least some of the hair or the clothing of somebody or other and to sacrifice this to the devil snake. This means an evil fate for those, to whom the hair or the bit of cloth belongs, for the belief exists among the Khasi that the person concerned will become sick soon thereafter, will languish and die or at the very least misfortune and poverty will come to him. They are therefore very much on their guard that nothing of that sort will come into the hands of a thlen adherent. For example, if someone loses a hair, he is extremely careful to throw it into the fire at once and thus destroy it before a thlen owner can appropriate it. If the thlen owner cannot get hold of anything at all, he at least satisfies himself by throwing stones at a victim or knocking on strange doors during the night. He then calls upon the thlen to tell him that he has done his best to get booty for him but that unfortunately he was unsuccessful. The devil snake is supposed to be satisfied with this for a time until he again makes his desire for human blood known. Many heathen, on the other hand, try to get well when they are sick by putting themselves under the protection of the thlen. They give the thlen owner some of their hair, pieces of clothing, and a corresponding gift of money or food as a sacrifice for the thlen--ai thlen--in order to acquire their health again.

How Do the People Accept These Facts?

a) The Fear among the People

172 776 A great fear of these murderers who are in the service of the thlen permeates the whole life of the Khasi; this feeling is still especially strong in the kingdoms of Cherra, Nyllien, and Nongkrem. Naturally they guard themselves well from people who are supposed to be in possession of a devil snake and they often do not even dare to speak their names out loud for fear that misfortune could befall them. Many of them are certainly known by the people; others are just guessed at. We tried very hard to get a photograph of such people who are considered to be thlen owners; but we met only with complete refusal from them. Their bad consciences probably made them fearful. I was able to photograph the house of a woman thlen worshipper in Mawrei, several [illegible] miles away from Cherra. In contrast to most of the Khasi huts, indications of wealth were evident on the outside, since the [28] hut was covered with tin. In spite of all my pleas the woman could not be prevailed upon to have herself photographed. Such an idea frightened her so that she cried out loud: "O, we are investigated so much!"

172 174 At night a Khasi does not really trust himself alone outside of his hut. If he is overtaken by darkness on the way home, he may be seen hurrying towards his home, singing or calling in a loud voice from time to time to give himself courage. A single man, even if he does not have to go far from his hut to work is not likely to go without his big knife — ka wait — under his arm to protect himself against all possible attacks. The people usually go together (in groups)

on the way to or from more distant markets.
When they go to the even bigger markets which are several days' journey away, they only go to the markets where they have good friends along the way, where they can spend the night. Even the missionary has to endure this general feeling of fear. For example, if he has to send something from one place to another which one man could easily carry; or if he is on a journey when he might like to send on his small amount of luggage, his laundry, and food. Even if the place is only a day distant, it is not possible for him to hire one man for [illegible] errand. There is nothing for him to do other than to hire two porters and naturally also to pay them, or to wait until a group of market people are going along the same way, to whom a single man can attach himself. If you criticize the people for the foolishness of their behavior or the inconvenience it causes, their simple answer is: "I am afraid of the nongshem suh" (killers).

On the other hand the people defend themselves against such criminals. According to ancient Khasi justice, the killing of such a nongshem suh is not considered murder and is not punished by death. Whoever has killed a nongshem suh does not need to do more than he who kills a robber, namely to give 5 rupees (7 gold marks) and a pig to the S'iem (king). In the kingdom of Nongkrem the official lyngdoh has the right to confiscate all the property of those persons who are convicted for harboring an evil spirit — jingkhih — in their house. The lyngdoh can keep the objects of value for themselves, while the house, including contents, is burned down. At the same time the people take justice into their own hands. In the year 1909 one of these murderers in the service of the devil snake was caught in the act in Nongkrem. Without more ado his nose was cut off and he was [illegible] the mark of Cain.

776 off and he was let go with the mark of Cain.

b) Liberation from the Thlen.

776 It also happens that people who revered a
778 thlen and sacrificed to it wish to free themselves
783 from its power and sever all connections with it. This is called pynsud noh ia u thlen, which means throwing away, exposing the thlen. However this is connected with a great sacrifice for the family concerned. 787 To get free of the thlen, there is no other way than to give up all their possessions. House and contents must be burned down; money and objects of value of all kinds thrown away and even the household animals must be given up. This takes place with the observance of a certain ceremony which is performed by the lyngdoh of a village with the participation of men designated by the S'iem (Khasi king). The sacrificer (lyngdoh) first asks the oracle about the place, mountains, etc., where the thlen goods should be taken. When that is found out, the ones who were the thlen owners go with the lyngdoh and the men named, as well as with a crowd of spectators to the place that has been determined upon. All the movable goods, including clothes, that belong to the ones who wish to be free, are brought here. The lyngdoh speaks an oath and then commands the thlen owners, who here been deprived of all their property down to their naked skins, to return to the village directly without looking around. Then the rest of the spectators leave. This occurs during the night. It is the superstition of the people that the devil snake is inwardly joined with property and follows it. Whoever should appropriate it therefore would also be in the power of the devil snake. The snake would climb on him as the expression says (kin u thlen ha ki).

771 Therefore nobody dares to appropriate the ob-
772 jects that have been thrown away or even to touch
773 them. Only into the house of the S'iem and into the whole royal family can no entrance be found by the thlen, and therefore some valuable things may be given to the Khasi king. This may be connected with the fact that usually on the next morning after the above ceremony nothing more is to be found of the objects that were given away. Therefore it rarely happened in former times that anyone kept a found object from fear that it might be thlen property and he might bring the thlen devil into his house with it. But if they did take an object they found, a piece of money or such, home with them, the oracle was first asked by egg throwing whether it contained any evil, and only when this was denied and the real owner could not be found did they keep a part of it; the rest had to be used for sacrificial purposes.

The immovable property is treated the same way as the movable property. Fields which the family formerly possessed lie fallow; nobody dares to take them over or to plant anything on them. [771] But the whole village hastens to help the former thlen owners who have lost all their property. They are given clothes and rice and helped in building a hut so that they can begin an honest life again.

a) Story of a Former Thlen Worshipper.

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775 How is all this known about the thlen, many ask, if the owners try to hide their secret? An indirect answer is already given by the whole previous presentation. Then it also happens, for example, that men marry into the house of a woman who is a thlen owner. Certainly this is not always known beforehand, although real thlen [Illegible; see Ref No. pp 2855 --Ed.]

776 owners can only conceal this for any length of
573 time with difficulty. Now when the woman gathers the members of her household and the unsuspecting man together for the thlen sacrifice, this man dashes out from fright and tells the horrible things that he has seen. He never returns to his wife by whom he was deceived by the concealment of such an important condition and he seeks another wife.

776 [229] The accounts of previous thlen owners
672 finally give further information. I will only
763 introduce one case as it was told by one of these. I am indebted for this to the kindness of the missionary in Cherrapunji, P. Corbinian Bonhein S.V.D. who has been there many years and to whom a former thlen owner related his experiences. This he translated into our language as follows:

"Formerly we were very poor people. Then one day we found a wonderfully beautiful smooth stone on the mountain when we were chopping wood, and we brought it home and preserved it. From this time on we had good luck everywhere; every undertaking succeeded, we never had losses and our fortune increased from day to day and even at gambling we never lost. Gradually we became rich people. Thus matters continued for four or five years. Then I had a strange dream. A woman appeared to me who said to me: "Look, I have given you such great wealth, now I also demand a sacrifice of you. You should sacrifice a long thoh khlih to me, i.e., a goat with a spotted head." The next morning I told my dream to the members of the household, and they thought that she was the goddess who was demanding the sacrifice owing to her. So we sacrificed a goat. But soon after I had a dream again and the same voice as before spoke to me again: "I have demanded a long thoh khlih of you and you only gave me a goat. The goat, however, that I demand,

776 is human blood ka snaa brin!" The next morning
482 I told my dream again and all my relatives were
783 frightened, for they knew now that it was the thlen devil and not the goddess who made them rich. But now we had to decide what we would do: give up all our wealth and possession or fulfill the will of the thlen. We decided to do the latter. But we let week after week go by until the thlen began to threaten that he would consume our whole house. Now we went, my brother and I out stalking to see if we could murder someone. We saw a woman from our village go alone to the forest to gather wood. We crept after her and when we thought the moment was right we fell upon her with blows and beat her till she was dead. Immediately thereafter, however, we fled deeper into the forest with the intention of taking the blood from the slain woman somewhat later when we could do it undisturbed. But after a while the woman came to her senses and luckily escaped back to the village by a different way. When she arrived home she told what had happened and named the two of us brothers as her murderers. Her relatives went at once to the chief and accused us. When we now came out of our hiding place to get the blood from the woman who we supposed was dead, we found to our astonishment that she had disappeared. We hurried along the road to pursue her but we could not find her anywhere. When we came home we were told at once that a woman had luckily escaped from murderers, but that it was still questionable whether she would live. We, however, wished secretly that she would die. But the chieftain had commanded that the woman be cared for carefully. When she had so far recovered that she could come to a judicial meeting, the chieftain ordered all the inhabitants of the village to the gathering. Our hands and feet trembled, and stuttering we confessed our

guilt. The chieftain then said to us: "You will pay the woman the entire cost of her care and agree that I have your thlen driven out and that you give up your property; if you will do that, nothing more will be done to you. A hut where you can live temporarily, a cloth [illegible] so that you can at least cover your honor, and rice which you need will be given you by the village until you can again save something. But if you do not wish to do that then a severe punishment will be meted out to you without mercy or pity." We submitted to the judgment of the chieftain. We then had all our possessions carried away and our houses burned down to the ground. And when we had moved into the hut which was built for us by the inhabitants of the village at the command of the chieftain, lo, this wonderful stone was there. We reported this to the chieftain and he took counsel with his elders as to what should now be done. They came to the conclusion that at the time of the first exorcism the Lyngdoh had not given us the command to go home directly without looking around. We had looked around and therefore the thlen had come to us again. Therefore the chieftain now commanded that the expulsion and exorcism and destruction should be undertaken again. This time we went straight home without looking around and so we were then free of the thlen. We have never seen the thlen itself." This much the report of the thlen worshipper.

The Position of the English-Indian Government in Respect to these Human Sacrifices.

But is it possible, many will ask, that such crimes can occur in a British province of the Indian Empire? Why are such things not called to the attention of the English government and why

472 does the government not interfere? These things
972 are known by the English government and it did and does its best, although the Khasi Mountains still possess their independence in part. Thorough mention of this superstitious immoral custom was made in the administrative report of the government concerning the Khasi Mountains and the Jaintia Mountains of the year 1881-82. Attached to it was the decision of the head of the government of Assam at that time (Chief Commissioner), dated August 5, 1882, in which among other things he stated: "Among the cases, which received judicial treatment in this year, were three murders of quite particular barbarity: two occurred to harmless old women, one to a boy. In none of these cases was a suitable reason given, and it is believed of at least two of them that they are connected with the remarkable superstition of the Thlen." After a presentation of this superstitious custom the report continues: "Many families in these mountains are known as Thlen supporters or are suspected of being so and are therefore feared and avoided. Whenever a dead body is found with the marks described above (blood drawn off through the genitals, hair, and fingernails cut off) and especially when death is not caused by a wound but by strangulation, it may be assumed with almost absolute certainty that the purpose of the murder was the propitiation of the Thlen. This was observed in one of the three cases indicated; in the two others these signs could not be found; however, since there was no cause at all for a murder, it was more than probable that these two are also to be ascribed to the horrible superstition. In each of these three cases one or two persons were convicted although they might not have been the only guilty

ones; one man was hanged and the rest were sentenced
to exile either of many years or for life."

There are also cases of murder in the following years in the government reports which are ascribed to the Uhlen superstition. Particularly noticeable and indicative was a case which occurred in the year 1890. The murder was committed only about ten miles from Shillong, the seat of the English government of Assam, about several hundred meters to one side of the government road, which leads from there to Cherrapunji. No trace of the murderers could be discovered, since the inhabitants of the nearby village did not care to appear as witnesses against them because of their superstitious fear that this would invite the revenge and anger of the Uhlen. They much preferred putting up with the government's sending to the village as a punishment a division of military policemen who had to be harbored and maintained by the inhabitants for a whole year at a great sacrifice. These are the great difficulties with which the government has to struggle in spite of their best will; with the conditions that obtain there it is not at all difficult to have a person vanish without any trace; but if such a case of murder does come to daylight, it is still a long way to the punishment of the guilty ones because of the lack of witnesses or their refusal to testify. An improvement here can only come from the inside by a change in their religious views. At any rate it is a comfort for Europeans to know that their blood as well as the blood of any foreigner who is not a Khasi is not at all acceptable to the Uhlen and would not suffice to propitiate him.